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AMAR CHITRA KATHA

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Mahabharata - 23

DURYODHANA HUMBLED

Sri Vidyabharathi Book Centre, Sringeri

Amar Chitra Katha
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Veda Vyasa's Epic on the Bharata race was first recited in public by his disciple Vaishampayana at the behest of the ageless seer Vyasa himself.

The recital took place in the august presence of King Janamejaya—great-grandson of Vyasa—and the many learned sages who had assembled for Janamejaya's Sarpa Satra (a 12-year-long snake sacrifice.)

The twenty-second session of our rendering of the Mahabharata narrated how the Pandavas while awaiting Arjuna's arrival from Indraloka, went around the earth on a pilgrimage. The brothers were finally reunited in the Dwaitavana where Arjuna displayed his celestial weapons.

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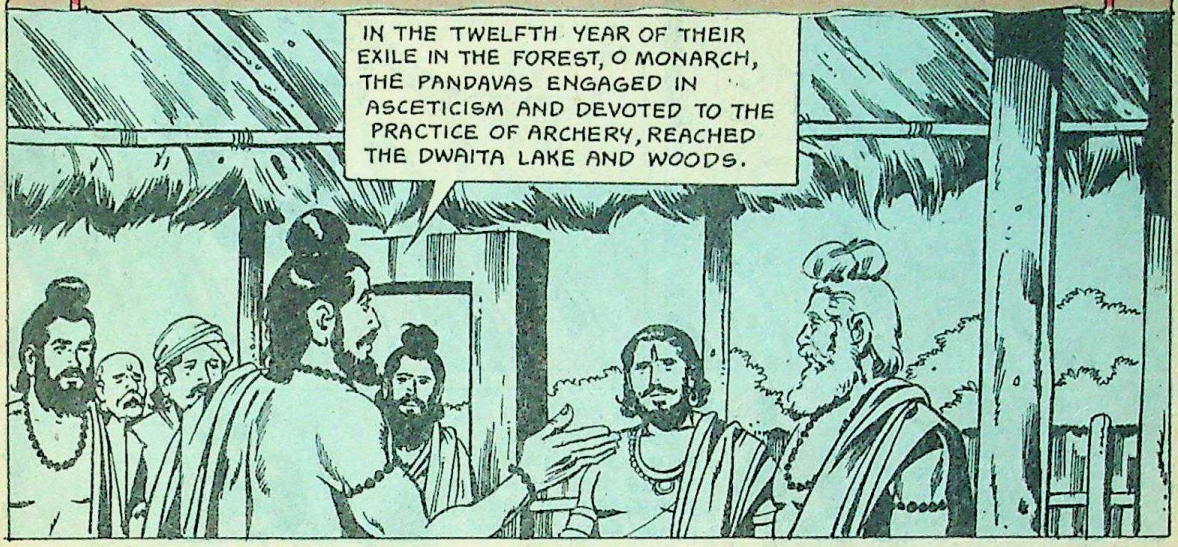

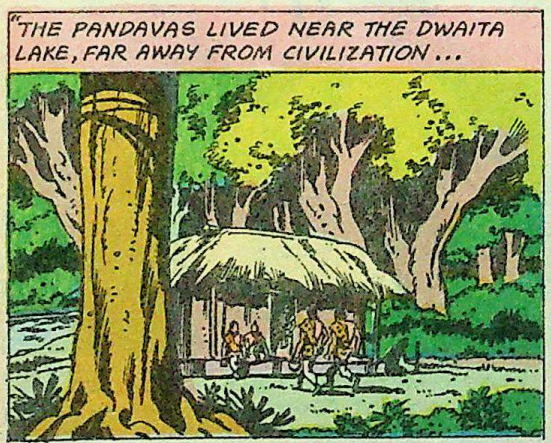

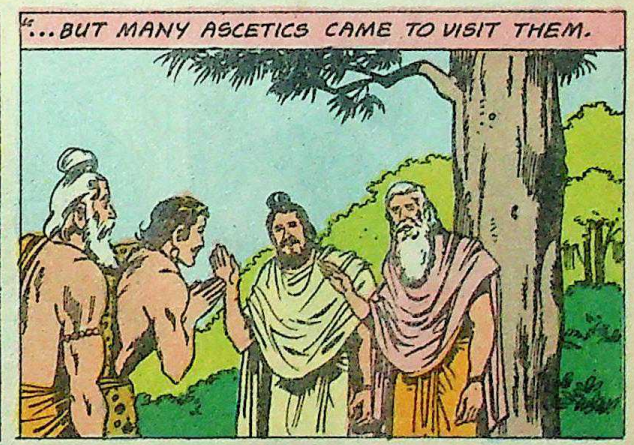

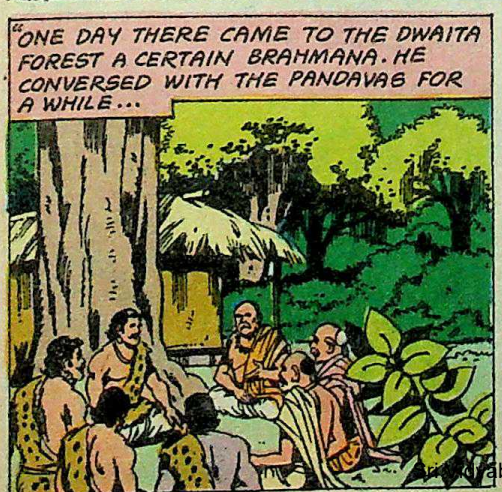

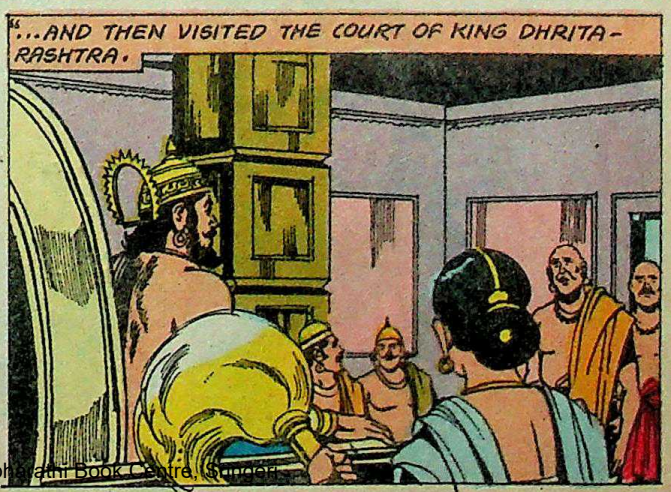

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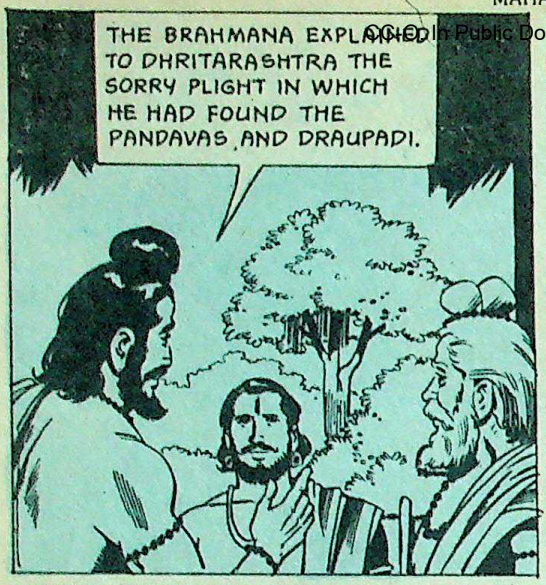

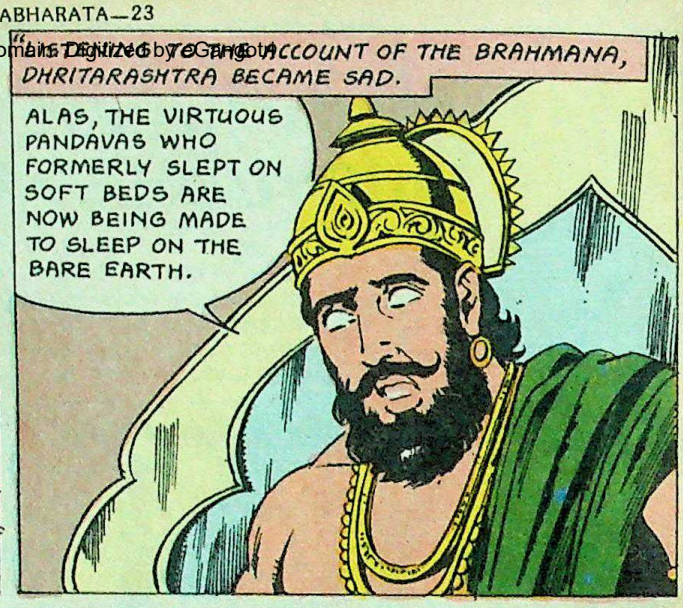

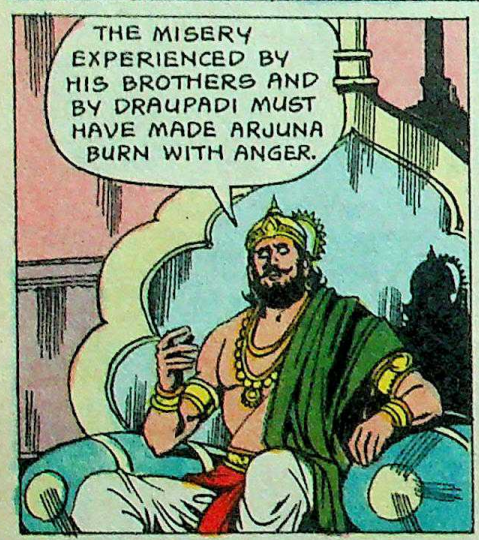

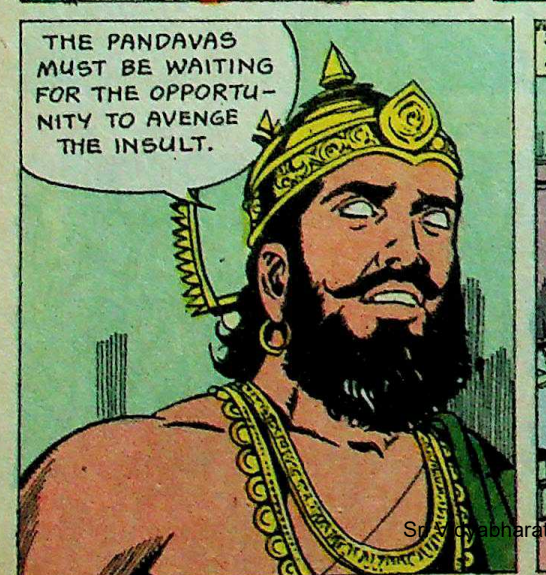

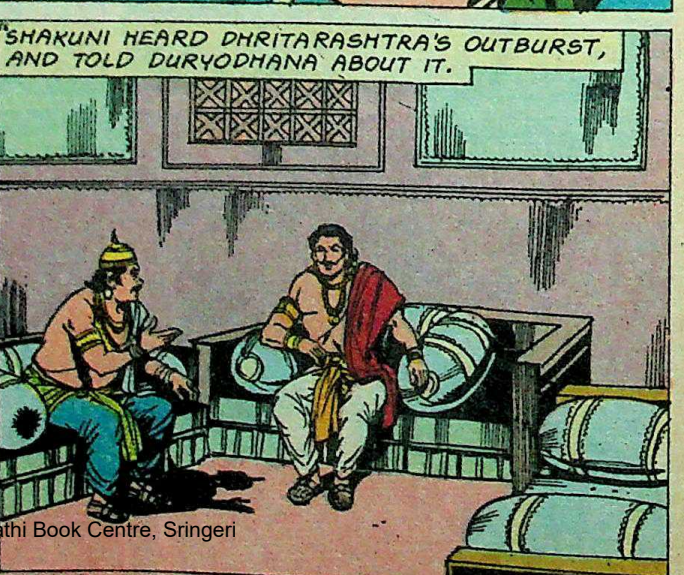

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"WHAT HIS FATHER HAD SPOKEN FILLED DURYODHANA WITH GRIEF. SHAKUNI AND KARNA TRIED TO CONSOLE HIM.

O DURYODHANA! HAVING EXILED THE PANDAVAS BY YOUR OWN PROWESS, RULE THIS EARTH WITHOUT A RIVAL. ALL THE KINGS OF THIS LAND WILL NOW CARRY OUT YOUR COMMANDS IN THE SAME MANNER AS THEY DID UNDER YUDHISHTHIRA.

"THEN KARNA SAID —

O KING, LET US GO TO THE DWAITAVANA AND LOOK AT THE SONS OF PANDU. LET US SEE THEM SHORN OF THEIR PROSPERITY, THE ONES WHO NEVER TOOK ORDERS AND WHO NEVER KNEW SUBJECTION.

WHO CAN BE A HAPPIER MAN THAN HE, WHO, IN PROSPERITY, CAN LOOK DOWN ON HIS FOES IN ADVERSITY? O KING, THE HAPPINESS THAT ONE DERIVES FROM BEHOLDING HIS FOES IN GRIEF IS GREAT...

...IT IS GREATER THAN WHAT ONE MAY DERIVE FROM THE ACQUISITION OF A SON OR IMMENSE WEALTH OR A KINGDOM.

LET YOUR WIVES DRESSED IN RICH ROBES LOOK AT THE WOEFUL DRAUPADI CLAD IN DEER-SKIN AND BARK.

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"HEARING SHAKUNI SPEAK THUS, DURYODHANA WAS VERY PLEASED, BUT WAS SOON OVERCOME BY MELANCHOLY. HE SAID—

O KARNA! I TOO HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT YOU SAY. HOWEVER, KING DHRITARASHTRA WILL NEVER PERMIT IT, IF HE GETS TO KNOW OF OUR MOTIVES. MY FATHER REGARDS THE PANDAVAS MORE POWERFUL THAN US AND IS ALWAYS GRIEVING FOR THEM.

I CANNOT MAKE UP MY MIND AS TO WHETHER I SHOULD GO OR NOT! I WILL CERTAINLY BE PLEASED TO CAST MY EYES ON THE PANDAVAS AND DRAUPADI AS THEY PASS THEIR DAYS IN PAIN AND SORROW.

BUT FIRST WE MUST THINK OF A PLAN TO CONVINCE MY FATHER AND BHEESHMA. TAKE THE HELP OF SHAKUNI AND DUHSHASANA.

TOMORROW WHEN I AM WITH BHEESHMA IN THE PRESENCE OF MY FATHER, YOU MENTION THE PRETEXT ON WHICH WE MAY GO TO THE WOODS.

"THAT NIGHT KARNA WENT TO MEET DURYODHANA.

O KING, WE HAVE DEVISED A PLAN BY WHICH DHRITA-RASHTRA WILL SURELY ALLOW US TO GO TO DWAITAVANA.

DURYODHANA APPROVED OF THE PLAN SUGGESTED BY KARNA.

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"NEXT DAY, INSTRUCTED BY KARNA AND SHAKUNI, SAMANGA, A COWHERD, APPROACHED DHRITARASHTRA.

O KING, THE TIME HAS COME FOR MARKING THE CATTLE AT THE DWAITAVANA.

"THEN SHAKUNI SAID —

IT IS ALSO THE RIGHT SEASON FOR THE PRINCES TO GO HUNTING. O KING, I BESEECH YOU TO GRANT DURYODHANA PERMISSION TO GO TO THE CATTLE-STATION AT DWAITAVANA.

MY SON, IT IS INDEED PROPER THAT YOU SHOULD GO ON A DEER CHASE AS WELL AS KEEP A COUNT OF THE CATTLE...

... BUT WE HAVE HEARD THAT THE PANDAVAS ARE NOW STAYING IN THE VICINITY OF THOSE CATTLE STATIONS. SUFFERING DEFEAT AT YOUR HANDS THROUGH DECEITFUL MEANS, THEIRS HAS BEEN A LIFE OF ORDEAL IN THE FOREST.

IF YOU ENCOUNTER THEM, THEIR WRATH MAY BE AWAKENED. THEY ARE NOW ENDOWED WITH CELESTIAL WEAPONS THAT YOU WILL BE UNABLE TO MEET. SO LET MEN LOYAL TO YOU FIRST GO AND INSPECT THE CATTLE.

O KING! THE SONS OF PANDU WILL NOT GO BACK ON THEIR WORD. THEY PLEDGED IN THE MIDST OF THE ASSEMBLY THAT THEY WOULD LIVE IN THE FOREST FOR 12 YEARS. BESIDES, THE VIRTUOUS YUDHISHTHIRA WILL NEVER BE ANGRY WITH US. AND WE WILL AVOID ANY CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH THE PANDAVAS. SO THERE IS NO LIKELIHOOD OF ANY MISCONDUCT ON OUR PART.

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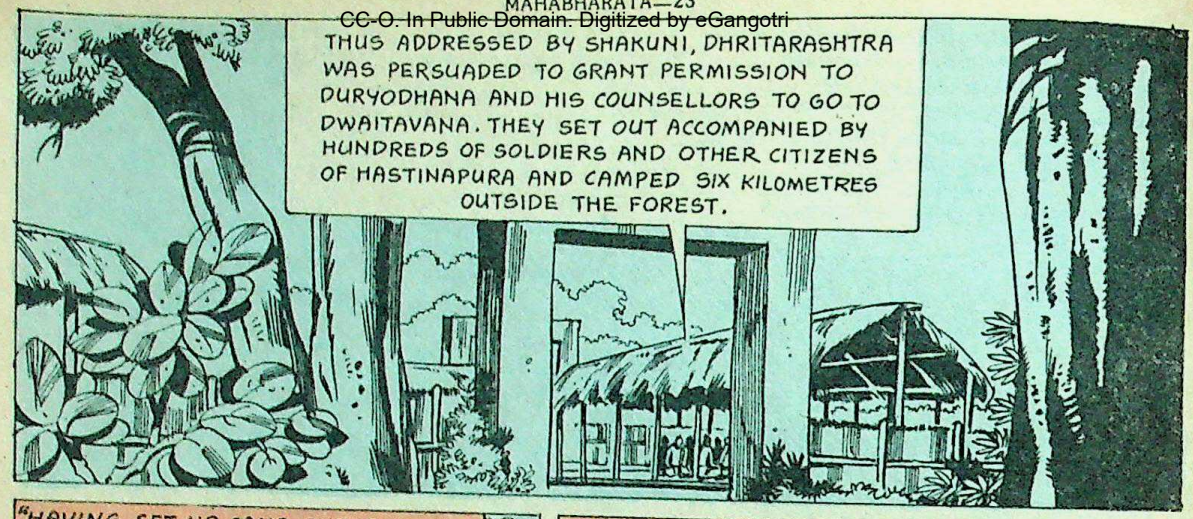

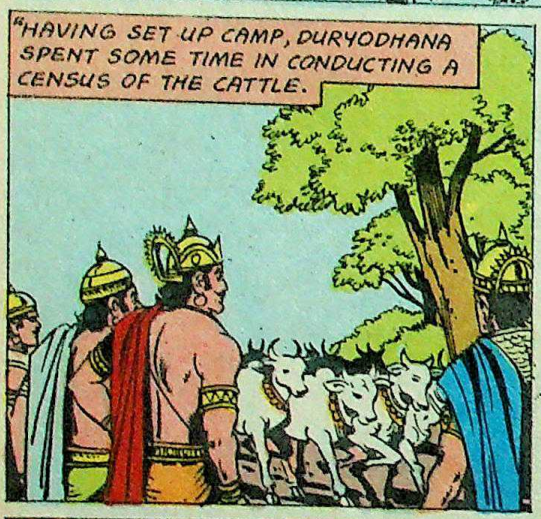

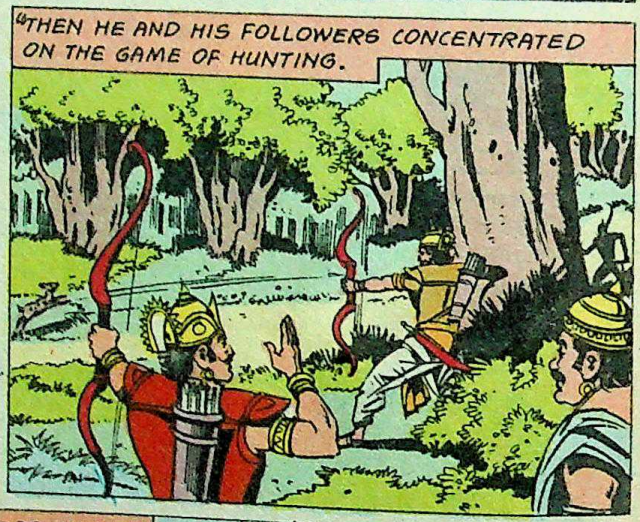

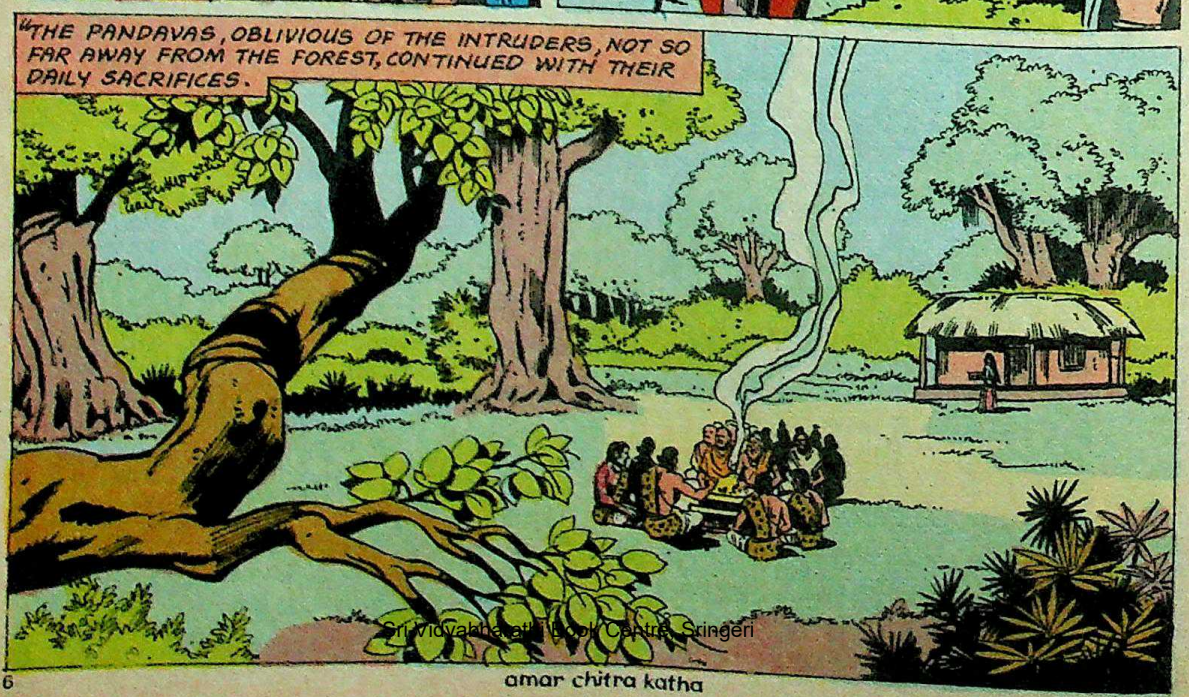

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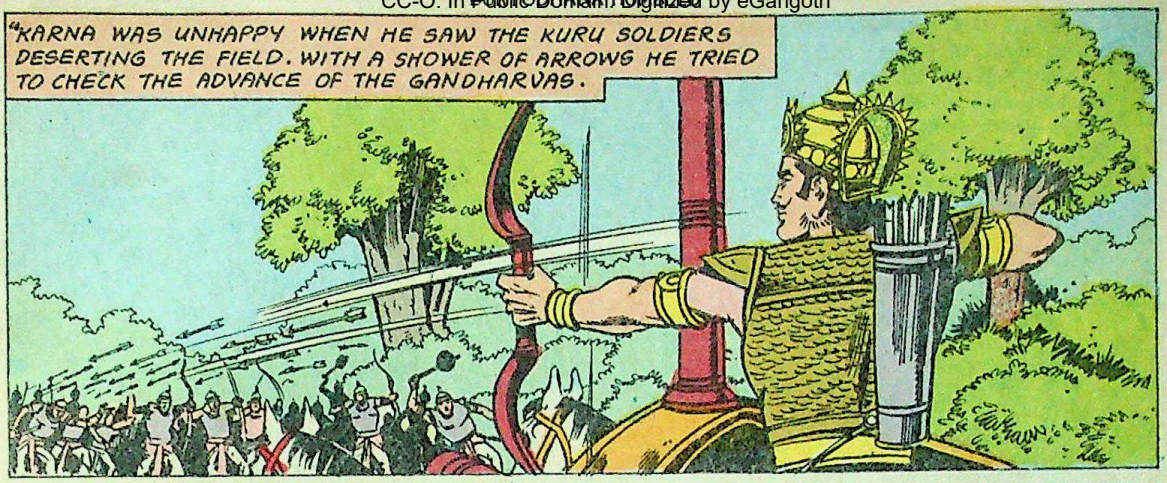

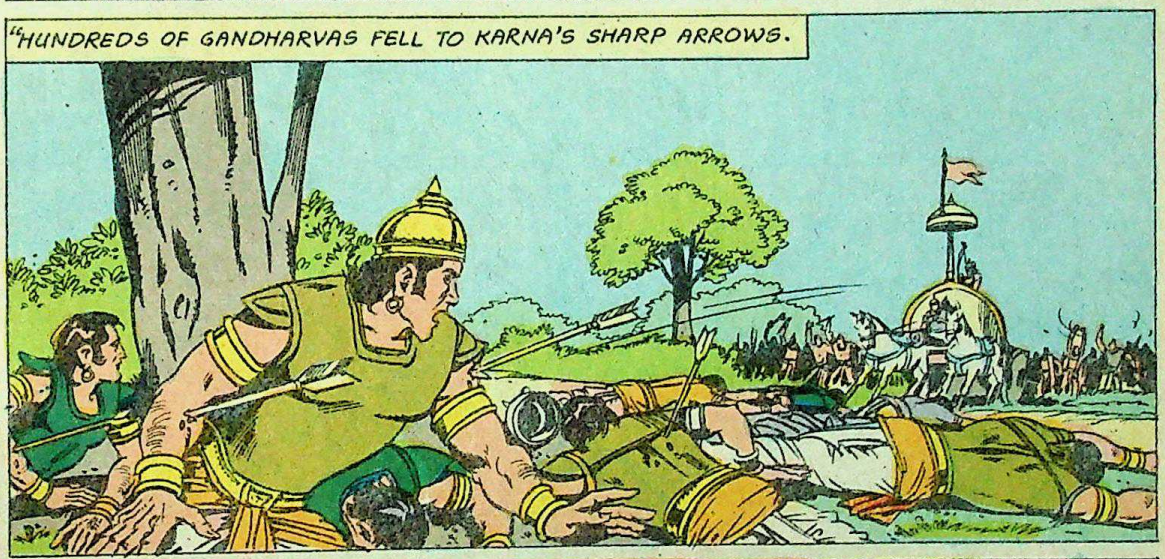

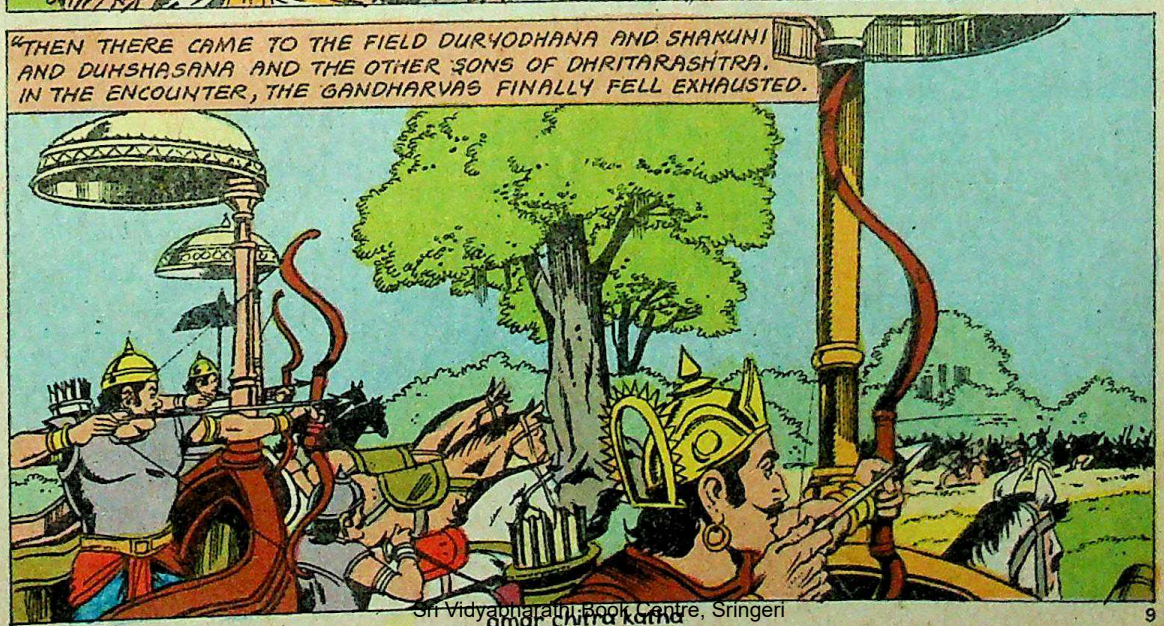

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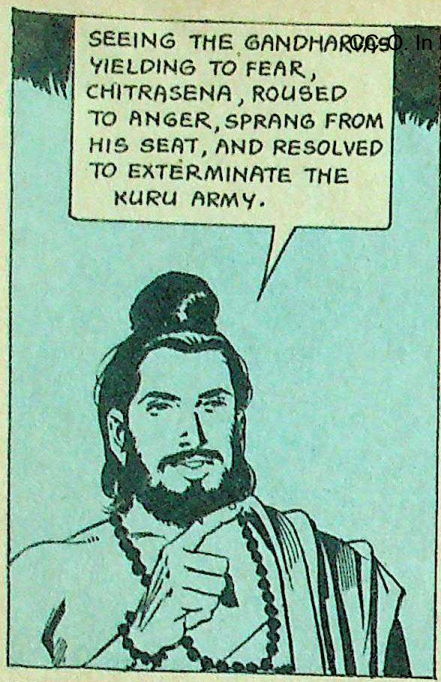

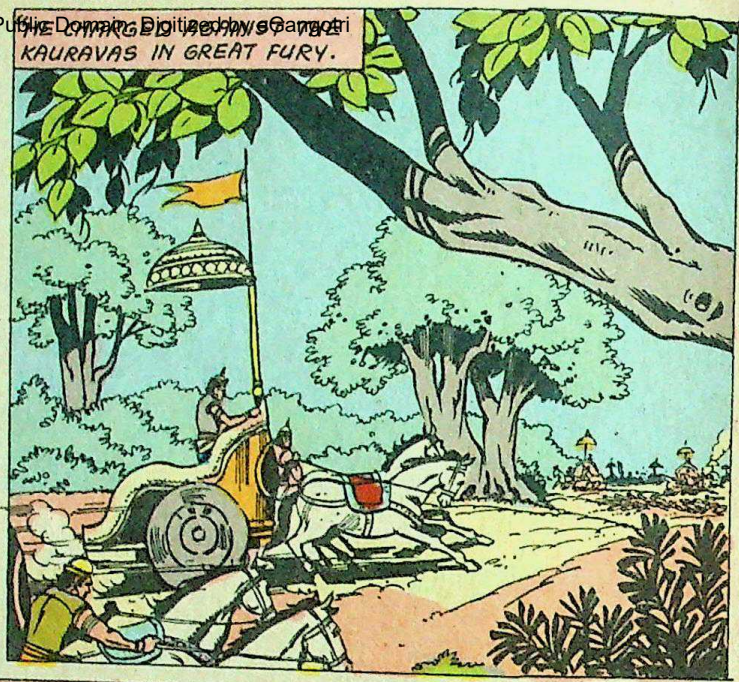

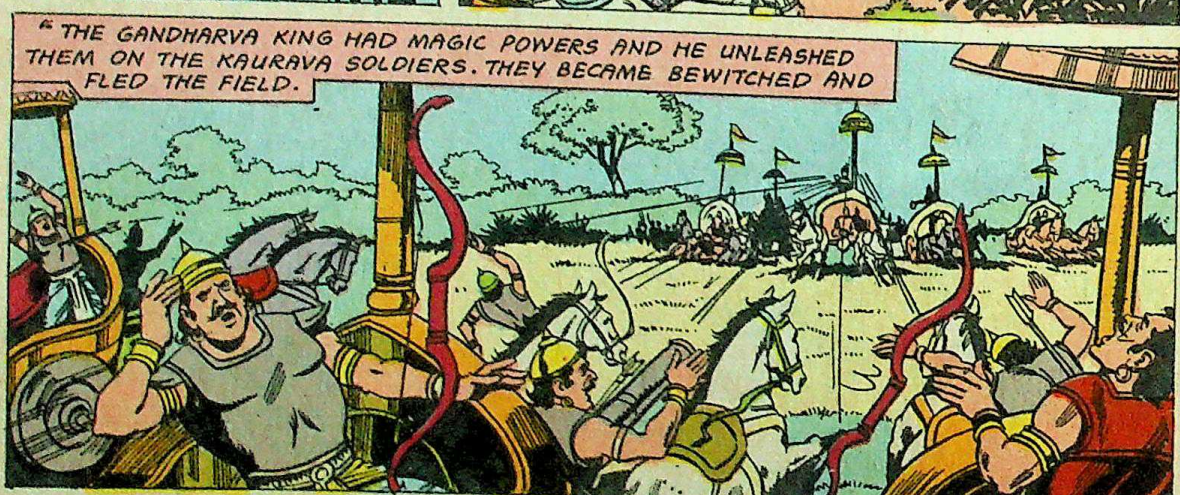

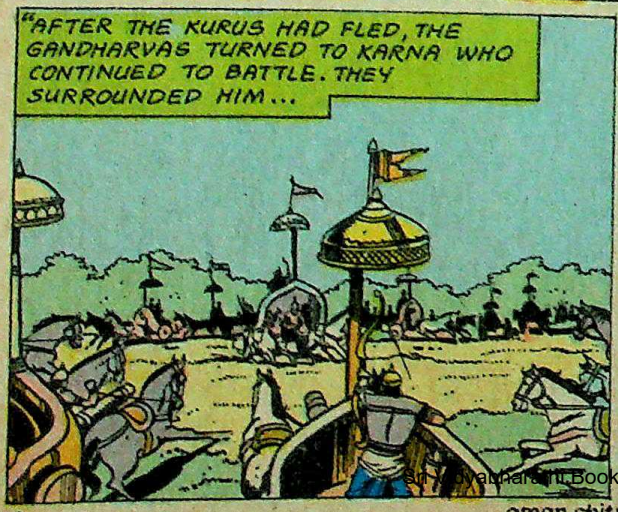

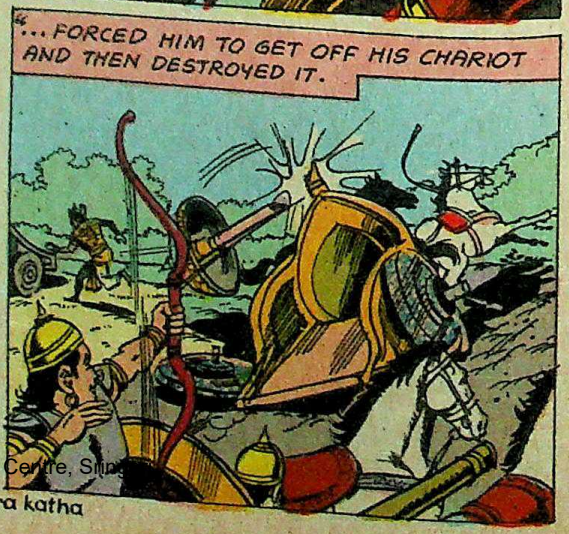

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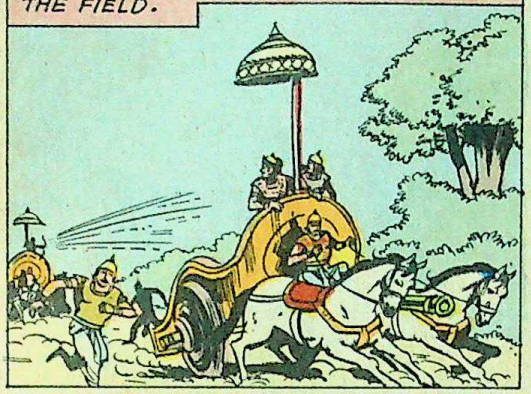
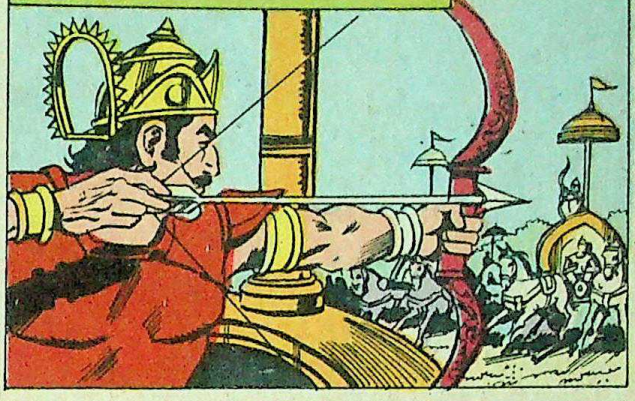
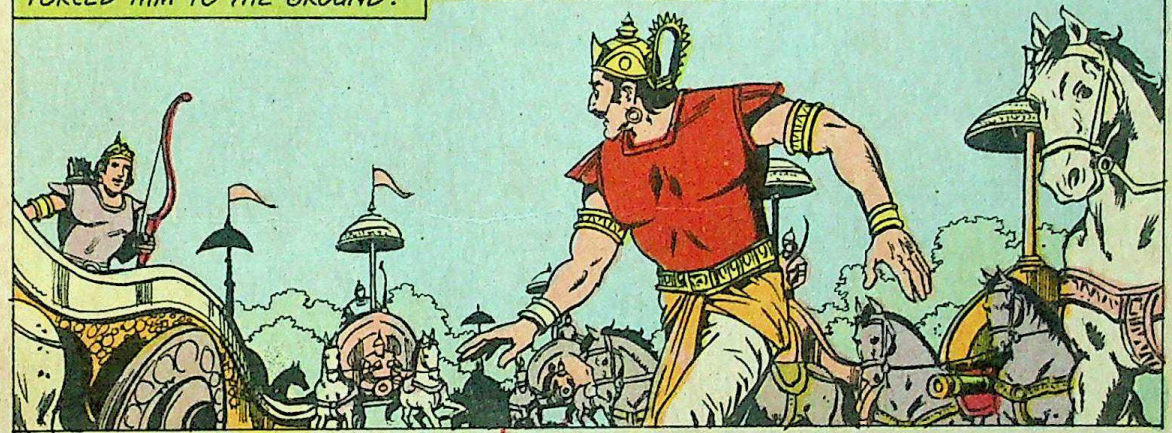
"KARNA LEAPT ON TO ANOTHER CHARIOT BUT HE COULD NOT KEEP UP FOR LONG AND WITHDREW FROM THE FIELD.



"BEHOLDING ALL HIS LOYAL FOLLOWERS FLEEING, DURYODHANA WAS MORE DETERMINED THAN EVER TO FIGHT THE GANDHARVAS.

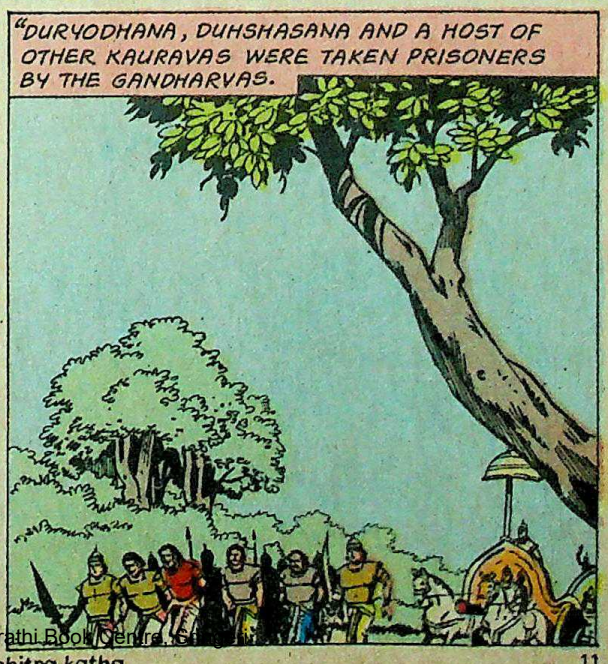


"BUT SOON THE GANDHARVAS SURROUNDED DURYODHANA'S CHARIOT AND FORCED HIM TO THE GROUND.



"THEN CHITRASENA RUSHED FORWARD AND SEIZED HIM.

"DURYODHANA, DUHSHASANA AND A HOST OF OTHER KAURAVAS WERE TAKEN PRISONERS BY THE GANDHARVAS.



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"SEEING DURYODHANA BEING TAKEN CAPTIVE, SOME OF HIS MEN APPROACHED THE PANDAVAS—

O YUDHISHTHIRA, OUR KING DURYODHANA HAS BEEN CAPTURED AND IS BEING LED AWAY IN CHAINS BY THE GANDHARVAS. THEY HAVE ALSO TAKEN ALL THE LADIES OF THE ROYAL HOUSEHOLD.

O YUDHISHTHIRA, PLEASE COME TO OUR RESCUE! RELEASE OUR KING AND OUR BROTHERS FROM THE GANDHARVAS.

"BUT AN ANGRY BHEEMA RETORTED—

WHAT WE SHOULD HAVE DONE OURSELVES HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED BY THE GANDHARVAS. WE ARE FORTUNATE INDEED THAT THERE ARE SOME PEOPLE IN THE WORLD WHO DESIRE TO DO GOOD TO US.

DURYODHANA IS AN EVIL MAN. HE WANTS TO SEE US SUFFER AS HE ENJOYS HIMSELF ON THE THRONE.

"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

THIS IS NO TIME FOR HARSH WORDS, BROTHER.

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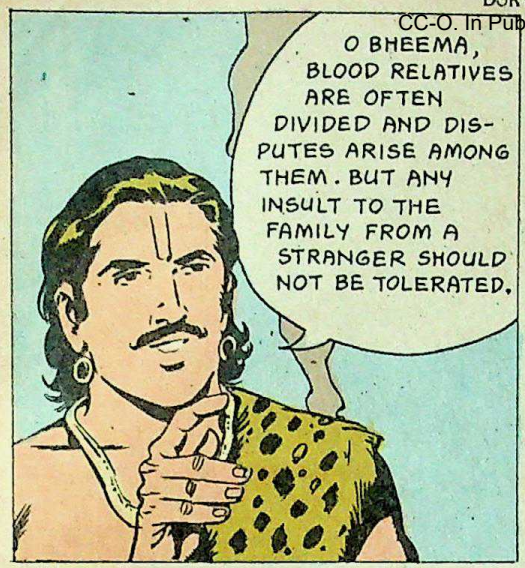

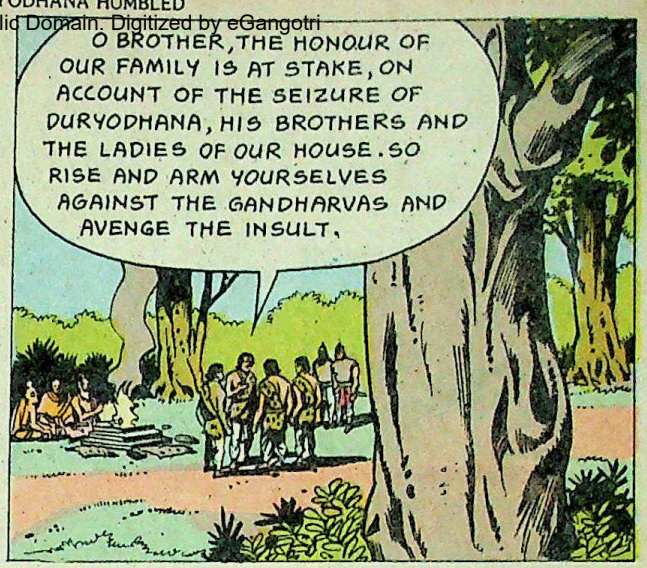

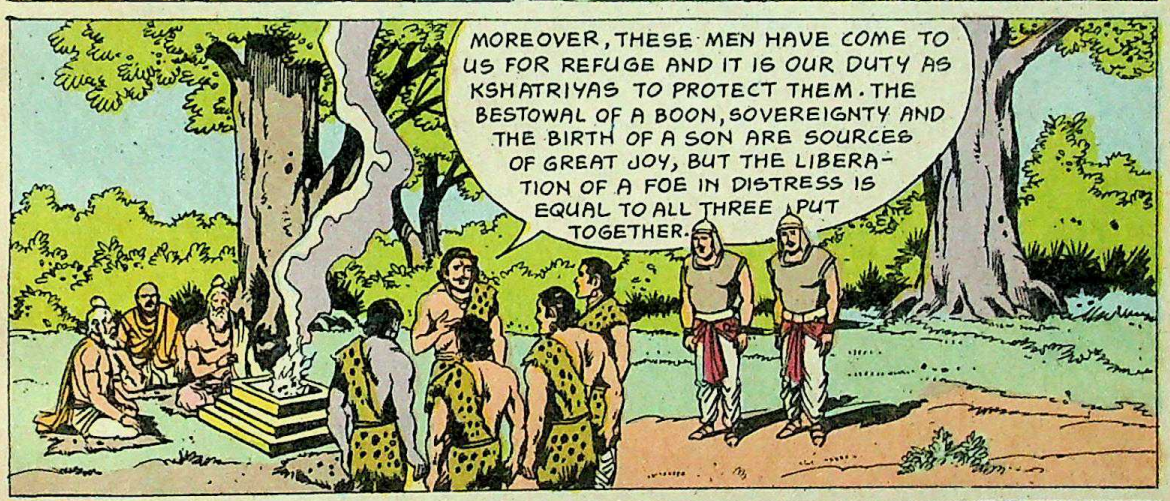

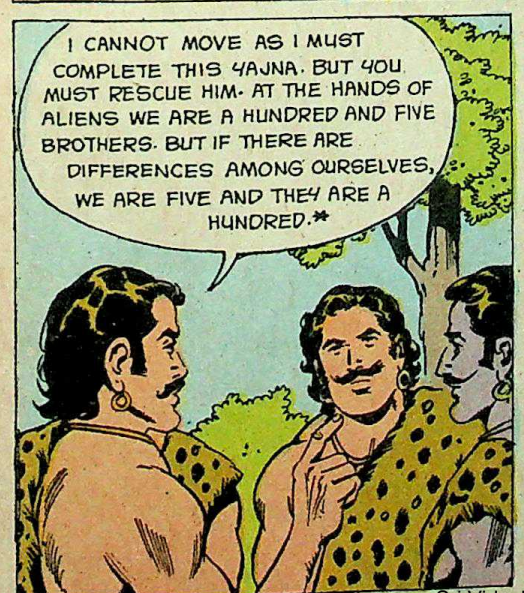

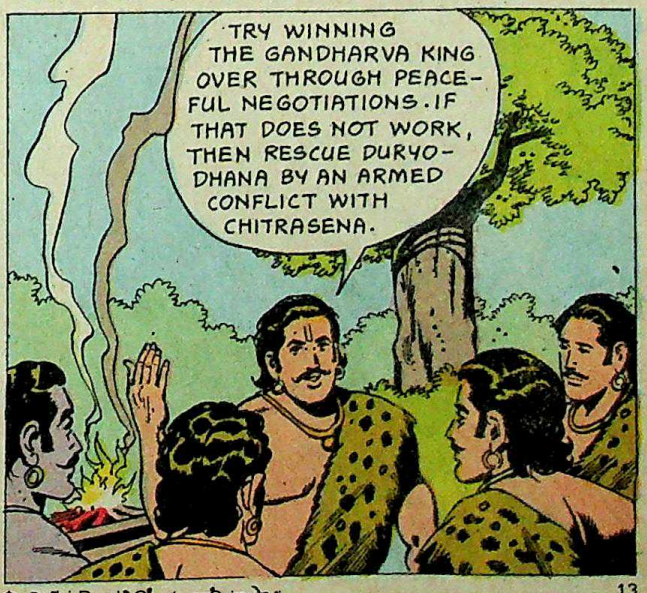

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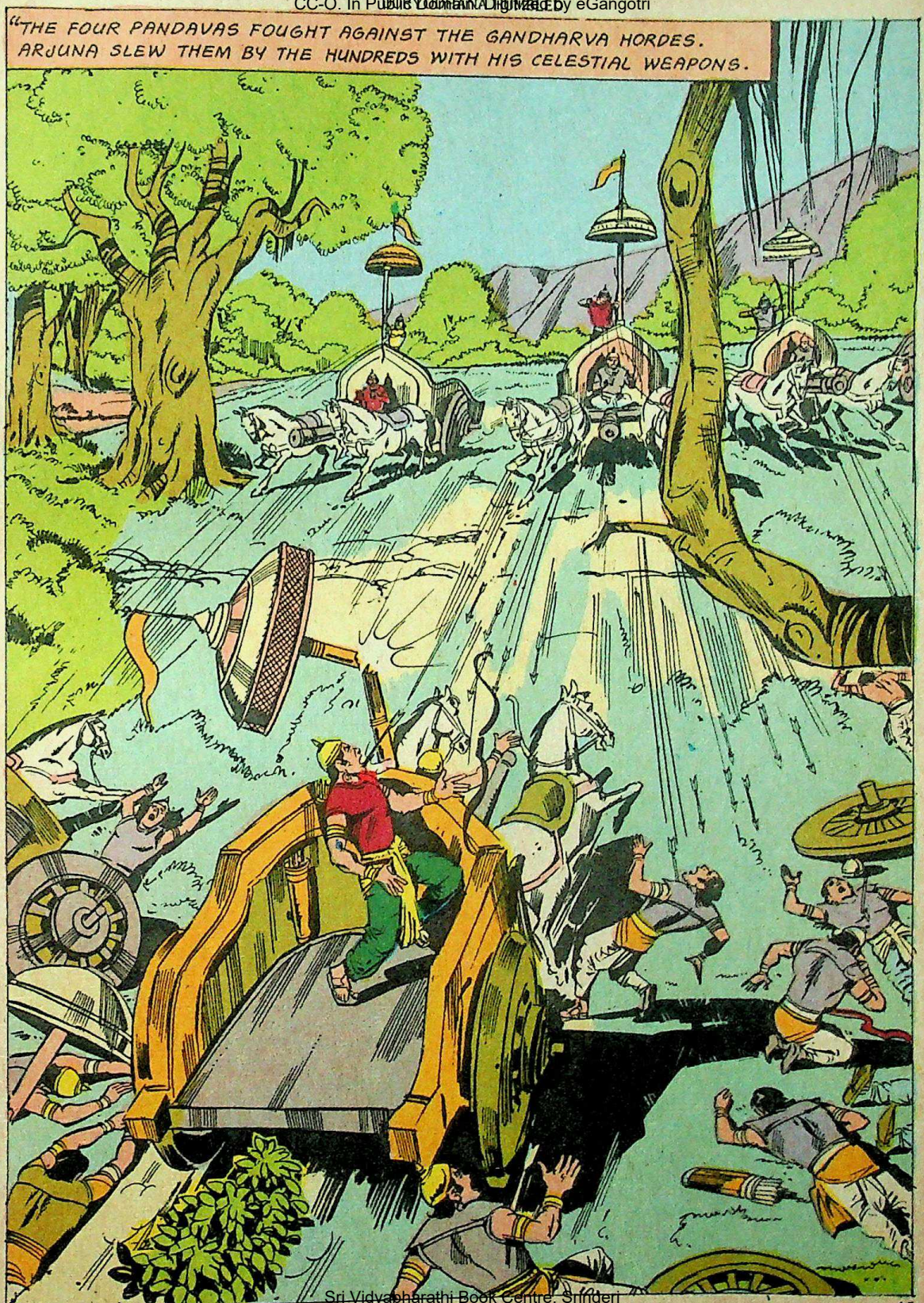

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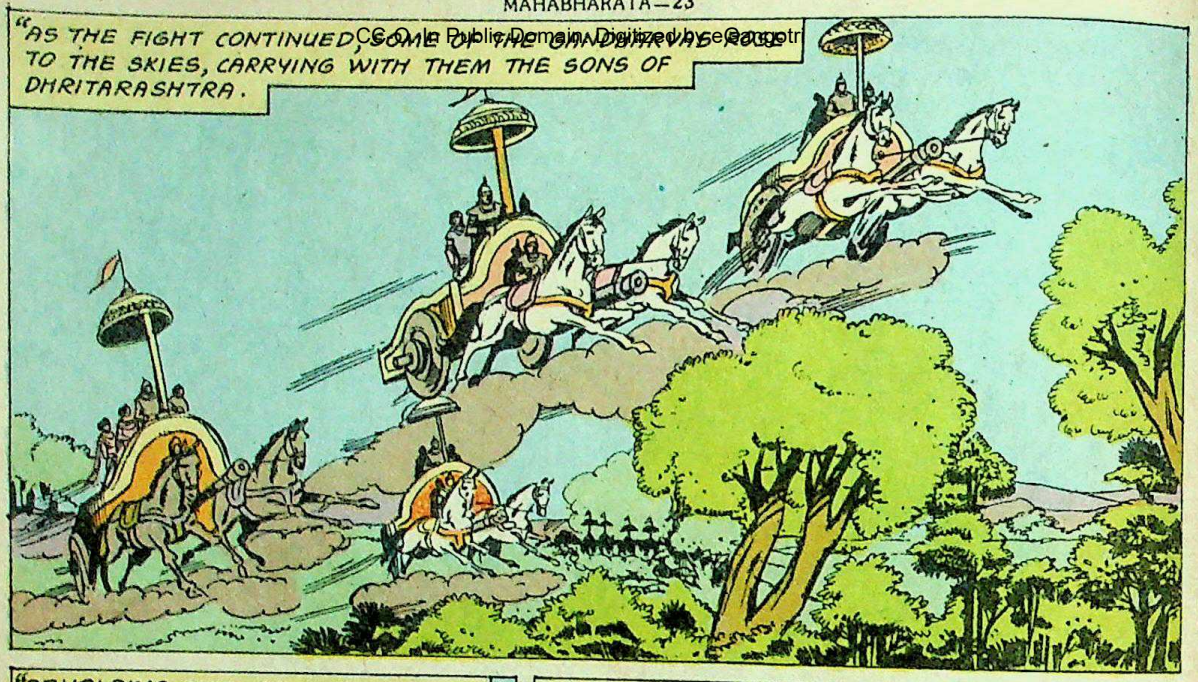

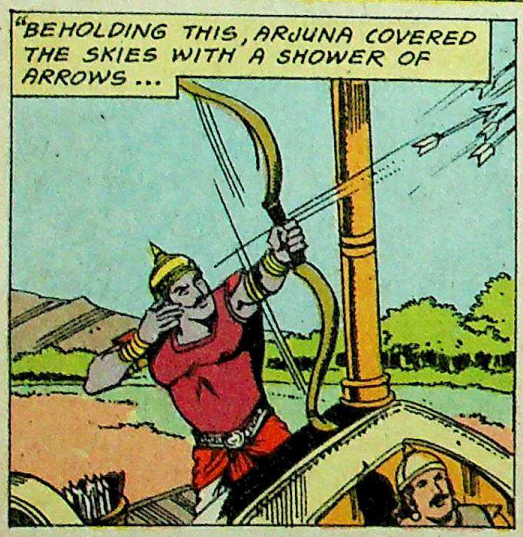

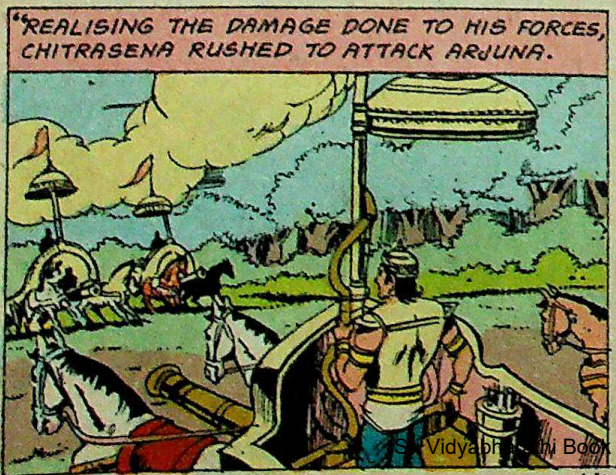

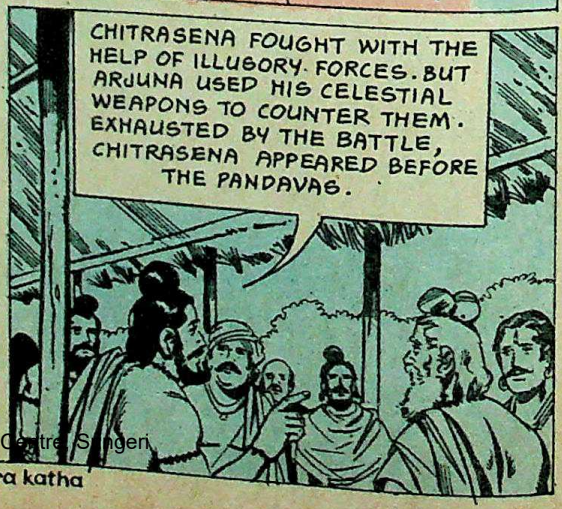

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"REMEMBERING HOW CHITRASENA HAD BEFRIENDED HIM AT THE ABODE OF INDRA, ARJUNA WITHDREW HIS WEAPONS.

"SOON THE OTHER SONS OF PANDU TOO WITHDREW THEIR BOWS AND CHECKED THEIR RACING STEEDS.

"ARJUNA THEN SMILINGLY SAID TO CHITRASENA —

O CHITRASENA, WHY ARE YOU PUNISHING THE KAURAVAS? WHAT PURPOSE DOES IT SERVE TO CAPTURE DURYODHANA AND HIS WIVES?

O ARJUNA, FROM MY CELESTIAL ABODE, I KNEW THE EVIL INTENTIONS OF THE KAURAVAS.

I KNEW THAT THEY HAD COME TO THIS FOREST TO MOCK AT YOU AND YOUR BROTHERS AND THE FAIR DRAUPADI PLUNGED IN MISFORTUNE AND ADVERSITY.

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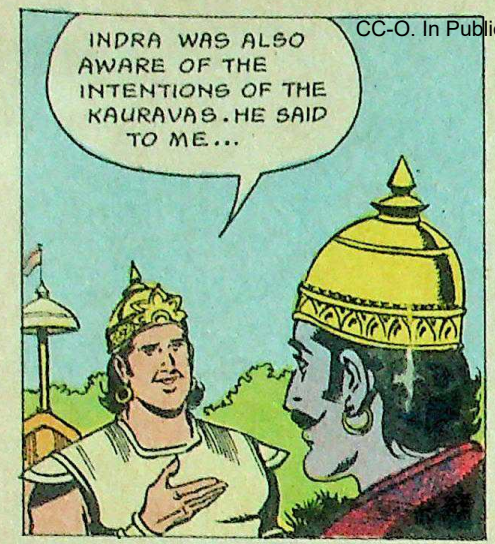

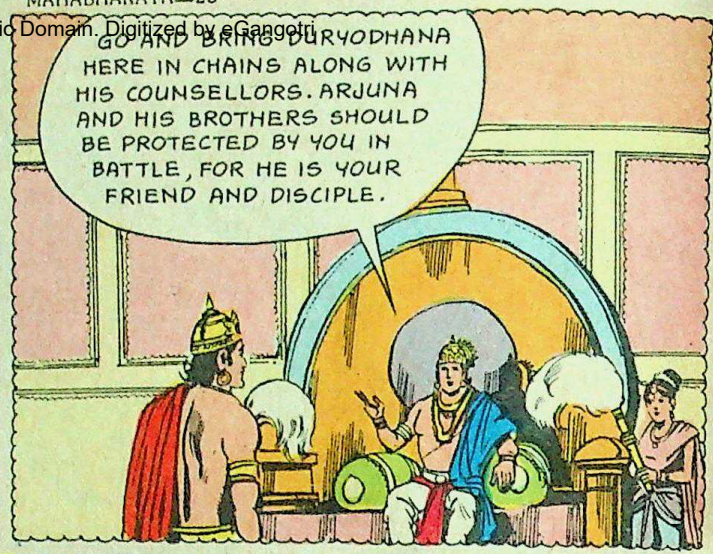

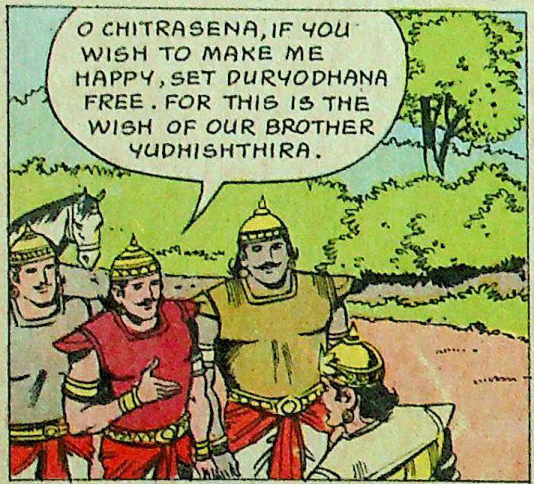

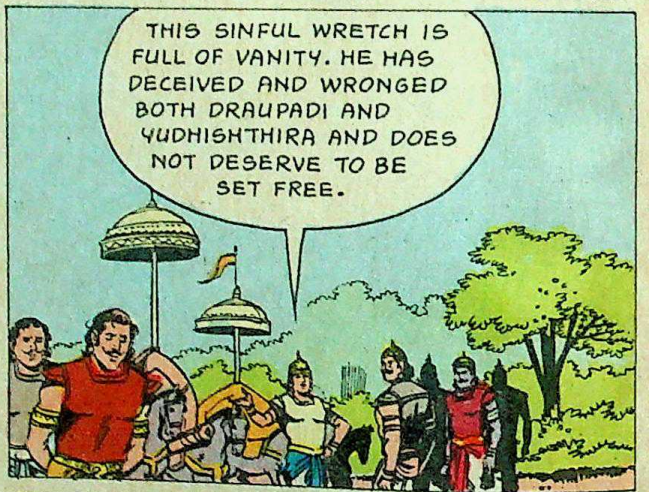

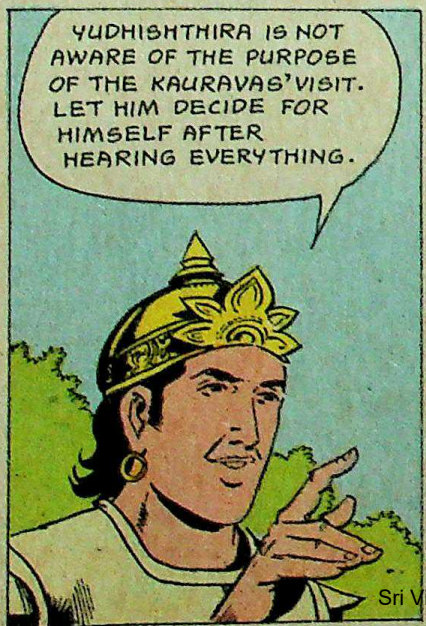

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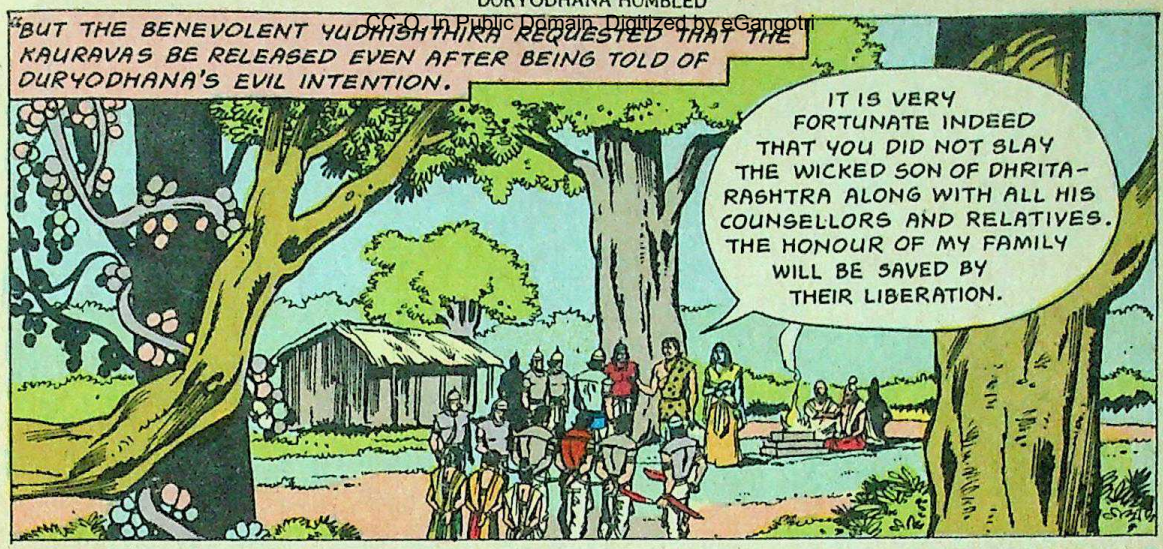

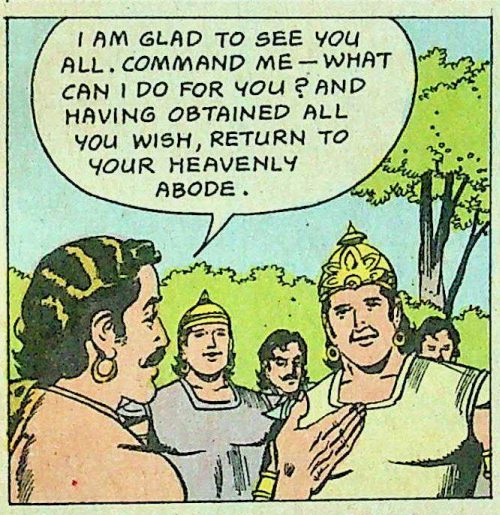

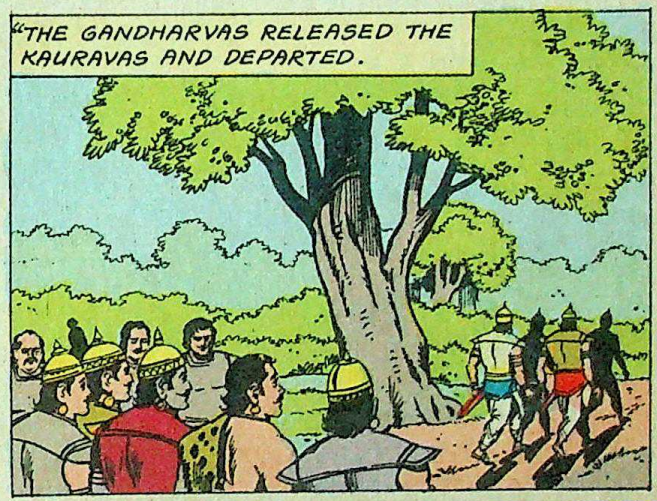

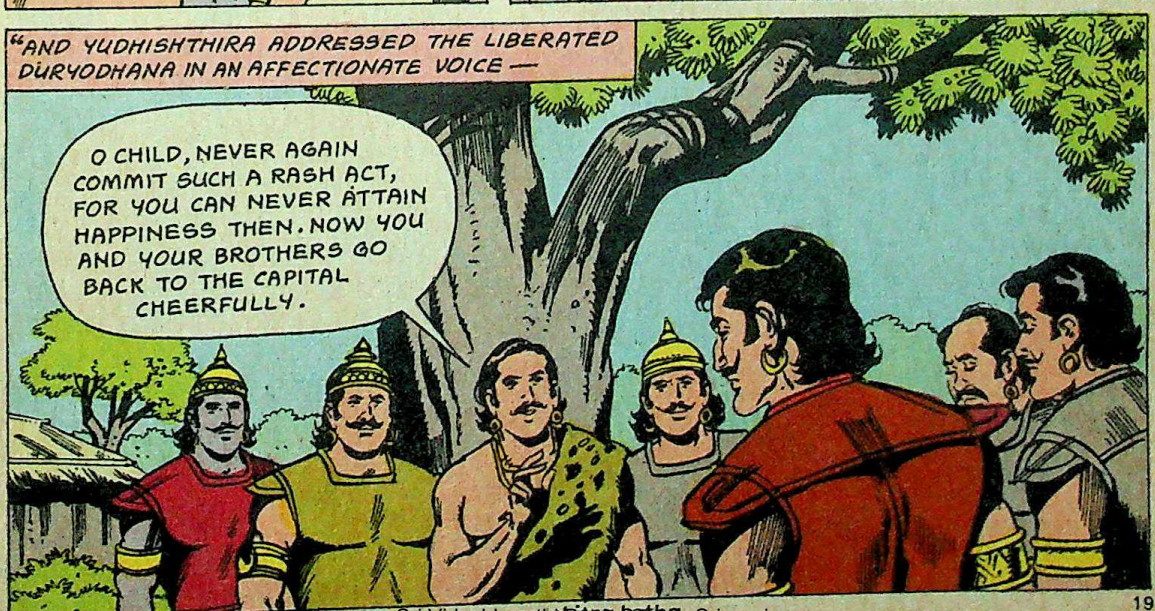

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O VAISHAMPAYANA, AFTER THE HUMILIATING DEFEAT AT THE HANDS OF THE GANDHARVAS, IT MUST HAVE BEEN EXCEEDINGLY DIFFICULT FOR DURYODHANA TO RETURN TO HIS CAPITAL.

O MONARCH, AFTER BEING DISMISSED BY YUDHISHTHIRA, DURYODHANA PROCEEDED TOWARDS THE CITY. ON THE WAY HE CAMPED NEAR A RIVER.

"THEN ONE MORNING, KARNA ARRIVED AT THE CAMP.

O DURYODHANA, IT IS FORTUNATE INDEED THAT YOU ARE ALIVE AND THAT WE HAVE MET ONCE AGAIN. BY GOOD LUCK YOU COULD VANQUISH THE GANDHARVAS WHO FOUGHT WITH MAGICAL POWERS.

TORMENTED BY THE GANDHARVAS, I MYSELF FLED THE BATTLEFIELD, UNABLE TO WITHSTAND THE FURY OF THE ENEMY ANY LONGER.

BUT YOU SEEM TO HAVE COME OUT UNSCATHED. O KING, WHAT YOU HAVE ACCOMPLISHED BY THIS BATTLE NO ONE ELSE COULD HAVE.

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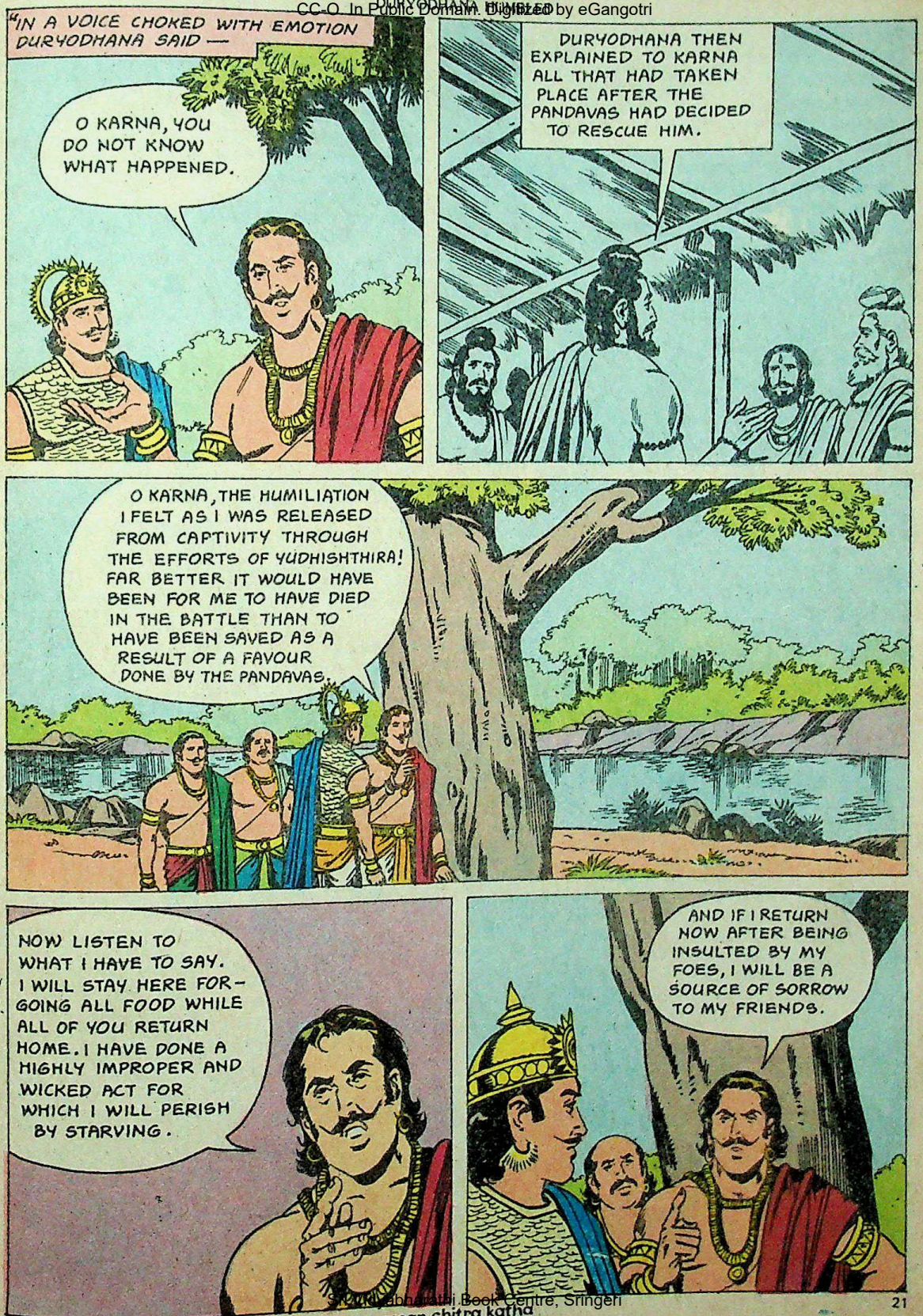

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"THEN TURNING TO DUHSHASANA, DURYODHANA SAID —

O DUHSHASANA, RETURN TO HASTINAPURA AND RULE IN MY PLACE. CHERISH YOUR SUPERIORS, GIVE CHARITY TO BRAHMANAS, GIVE REFUGE TO FRIENDS AND DEFEND THE KINGDOM.

"DUHSHASANA WAS SO MOVED BY GRIEF THAT HE FELL AT HIS BROTHER'S FEET.

RELENT, O KING, THIS WILL NEVER BE. THE EARTH MAY SPLIT, THE HEAVEN MAY BREAK INTO PIECES, THE SUN MAY CAST OFF HIS SPLENDOUR, BUT I CANNOT RULE IN YOUR PLACE.

"NOW WEEPING INCONSOLABLY DUHSHASANA SAID —

RELENT, O KING, YOU ALONE SHALL BE KING FOR A HUNDRED YEARS.

"BEHOLDING THE TWO BROTHERS WEEPING THUS, KARNA SAID —

O KURU PRINCES, WHY DO YOU YIELD TO SORROW LIKE ORDINARY MEN? MERE WEEPING CAN NEVER EASE A MAN'S GRIEF.

THE PANDAVAS ONLY DID THEIR DUTY BY LIBERATING YOU. THEY LIVE IN YOUR DOMINION AND SO THEY HAVE TO BE AGREEABLE TO YOU.

O KING, COME BACK TO HASTINAPURA. IF YOU DECIDE TO KILL YOURSELF BY FORGOING FOOD, YOU WILL BE THE OBJECT OF LAUGHTER AMONG OTHER KINGS.

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"SHAKUNI CONSOLED DURYODHANA.

KARNA IS RIGHT. WHY DO YOU WISH TO FORGO THE WEALTH I HAVE WON FOR YOU FROM THE PANDAVAS?

"AFTER HEARING ALL THAT HIS FRIENDS AND BROTHERS HAD TO SAY, DURYODHANA ANSWERED WITH SORROW.

I HAVE NOTHING MORE TO DO WITH VIRTUE, WEALTH, FRIENDSHIP, AFFLUENCE, SOVEREIGNTY AND PLEASURES. DO NOT COME IN THE WAY OF MY RESOLVE, BUT LEAVE ME ALONE. I AM FIRMLY RESOLVED TO CAST AWAY MY LIFE BY FORGOING FOOD. RETURN TO THE CITY AND TREAT MY SUPERIORS THERE RESPECTFULLY.

"THEN, CLAD IN RAGS, HE SPREAD KUSHA GRASS ON THE EARTH AND PREPARED HIMSELF TO OBSERVE THE HIGHEST VOW OF LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE. HE PRAYED AND WORSHIPPED IN SILENCE.

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MEANWHILE, O MONARCH, THE FIERCE DAITYAS AND DANAVAS, DEFEATED EARLIER BY THE DEVAS AND DWELLING IN THE NETHER REGIONS, BECAME AWARE OF DURYODHANA'S INTENTIONS. KNOWING THAT IF THE KING DIED, THEIR PARTY WOULD BE WEAKENED, THEY COMMENCED A YAJNA TO SUMMON DURYODHANA TO THEIR PRESENCE.

"AFTER THE RITES HAD ENDED, A FEMALE DEITY AROSE FROM THE FIRE—

WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?

GO, BRING KING DURYODHANA, WHO IS NOW OBSERVING A FAST UNTO DEATH.

Sri Vidyabharathi Bo... Srinagar

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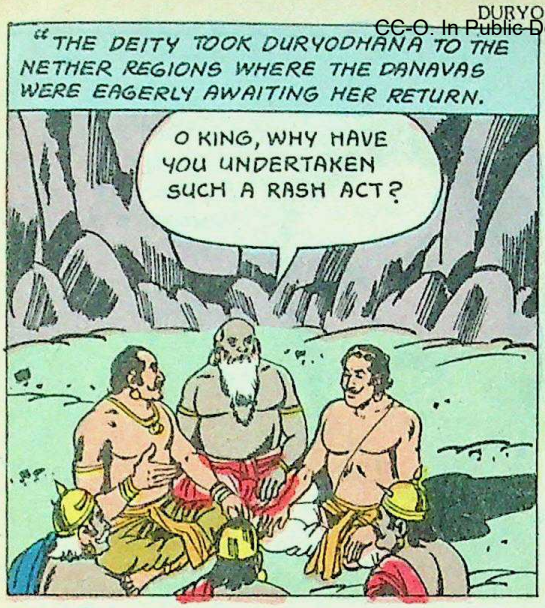

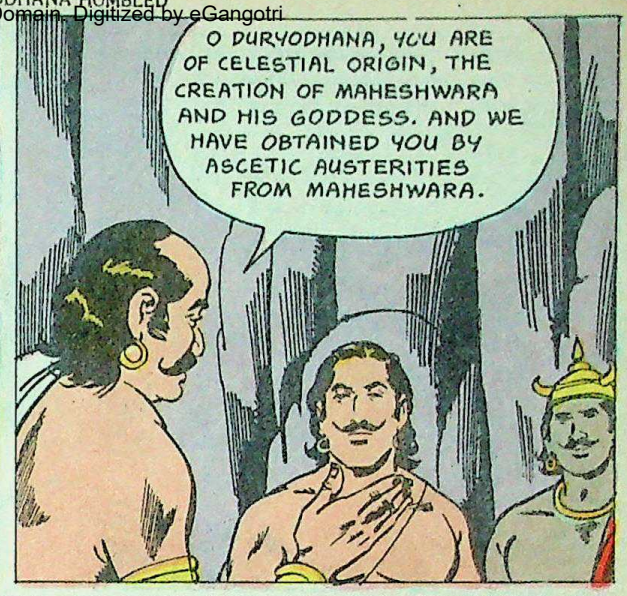

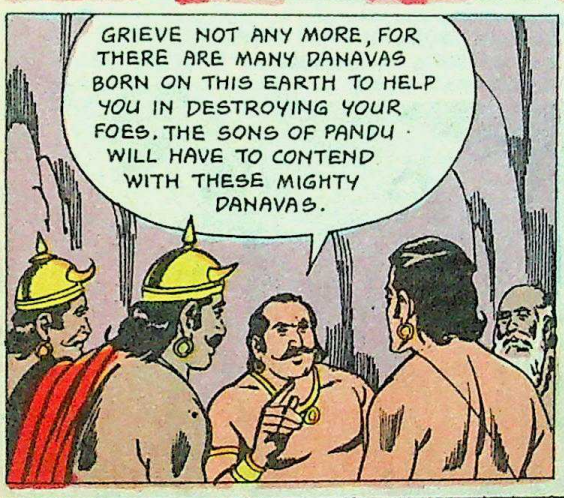

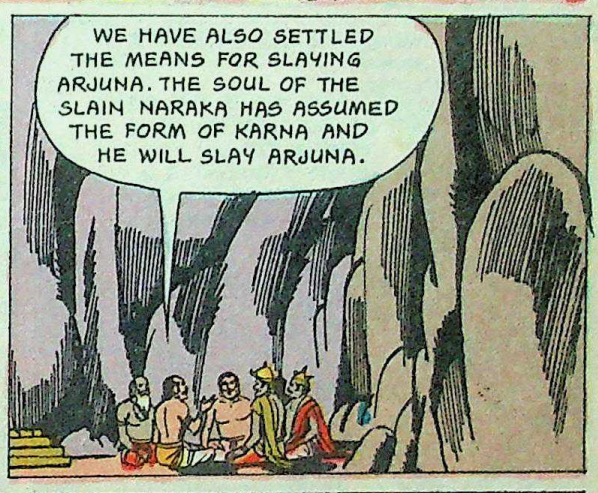

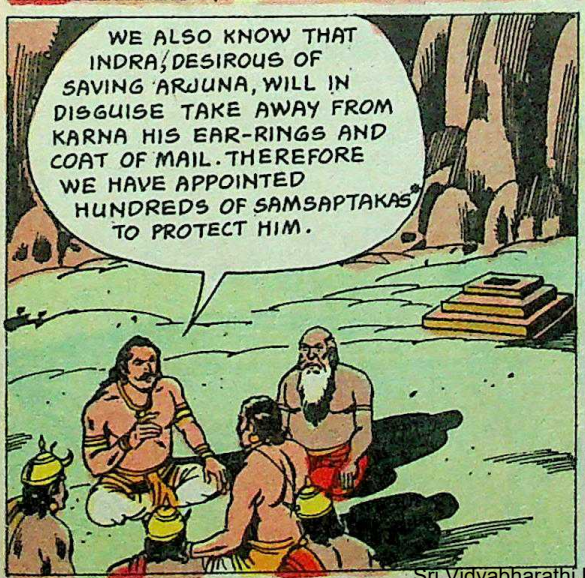

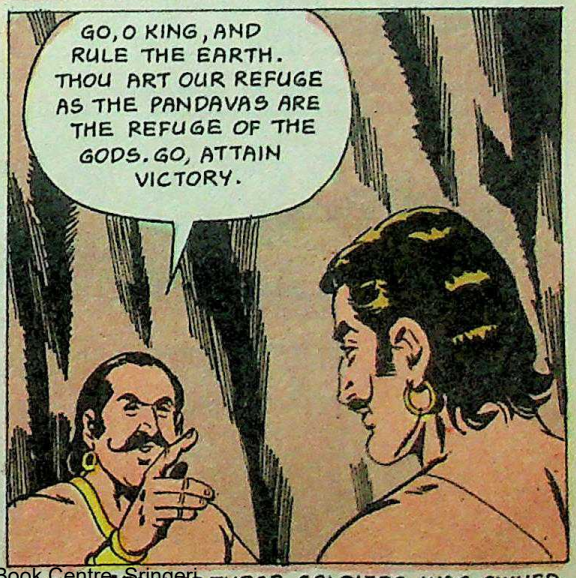

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* SOLDIERS THAT HAVE SWORN TO CONQUER OR DIE. A FULL ARMY OF THESE SOLDIERS WAS OWNED BY KRISHNA, WHO GAVE THEM TO DURYODHANA TO FIGHT FOR HIM.

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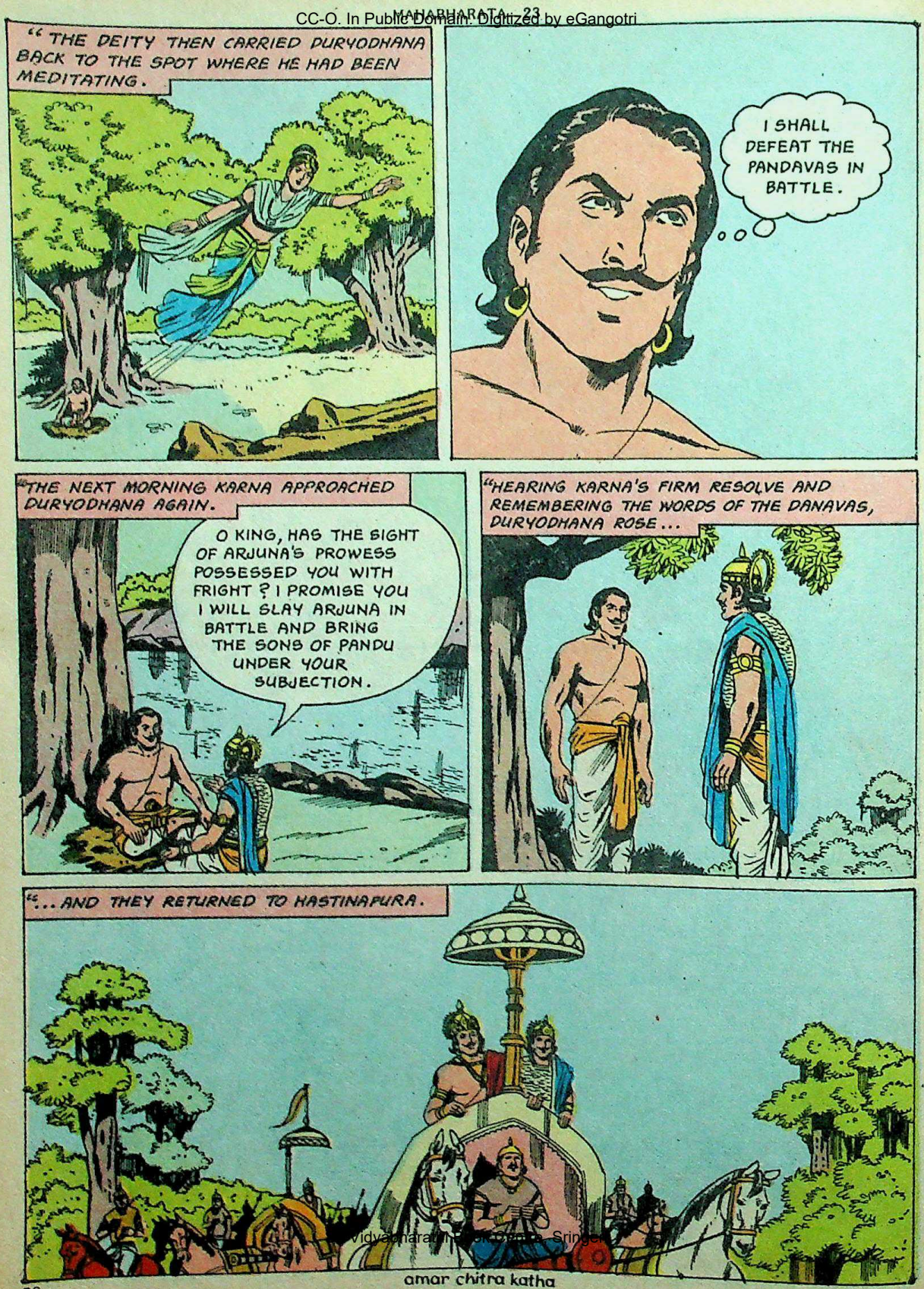

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"DURYODHANA RETURNED TO HASTINAPURA. HE MET CRITICISM, NOT PRAISE.

O CHILD, I TOLD YOU BEFORE YOU SET OUT, THAT THE JOURNEY DID NOT PLEASE ME. YET YOU WENT. AND AS A CONSEQUENCE YOU WERE TAKEN CAPTIVE AND HAD TO BE FREED BY THE PANDAVAS. YET YOU ARE NOT ASHAMED.

YOU HAVE WITNESSED THE MIGHT OF THE PANDAVAS AND YOUR STRENGTH IS NOT EVEN A FOURTH OF IT.

O DURYODHANA, THEREFORE, FOR THE WELFARE OF THE RACE, CONCLUDE PEACE WITH THE VALIANT SONS OF PANDU.

"ON HEARING THIS, DURYODHANA SAILED OUT OF THE ROOM WITH SHAKUNI...

"...LEAVING BHEESHMA WHO HUNG HIS HEAD IN SHAME.

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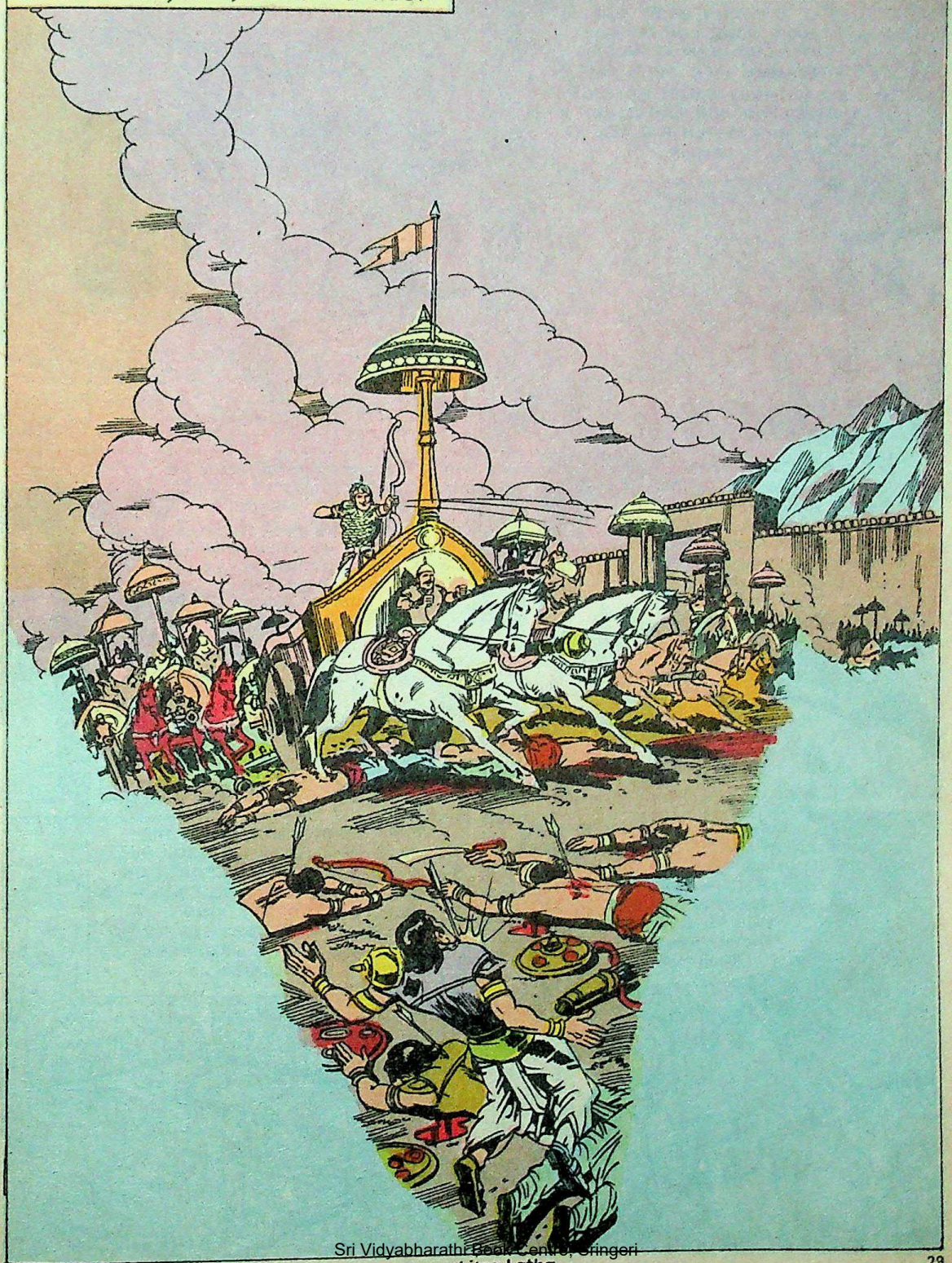
"WITH A LARGE ARMY AT HIS DISPOSAL, KARNA SET OUT TO CONQUER THE WORLD. HE BEGAN BY SUBJUGATING KING DRUPADA, AND THEN CONQUERED ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE NORTH, EAST, SOUTH AND WEST.



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"WHEN A VICTORIOUS KARNA RETURNED TO HASTINAPURA, HE WAS RECEIVED WITH HONOUR.

O KARNA, WHAT YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME, NOT EVEN DRONA OR KRIPA OR BHEESHMA HAS BEEN ABLE TO DO. WITHOUT DOUBT NEITHER THE PANDAVAS NOR ANY OTHER KING IS ANY MATCH FOR YOU IN VALOUR.

BUT NOW I WISH TO PERFORM THE MIGHTY RAJASOOYA YAJNA WHICH THE PANDAVAS PERFORMED.

O KING, NOW THAT ALL THE RULERS OF THE EARTH HAVE BEEN BROUGHT UNDER YOUR SUBJECTION, SUMMON THE PRIESTS AND CONDUCT THE SACRIFICE.

"BUT WHEN THE BRAHMANAS WERE SENT FOR —

O KING, DHRITARASHTRA WHO IS YOUR ELDER IS STILL LIVING, SO YOU CANNOT PERFORM THE RAJASOOYA.

HOWEVER THERE IS ANOTHER GREAT SACRIFICE—THE VAISHNAVA — WHICH YOU CAN PERFORM. OTHER THAN VISHNU NO ONE HAS PERFORMED THIS SACRIFICE WHICH IS EQUAL IN IMPORTANCE TO THE RAJASOOYA.

DURYODHANA AGREED TO THE VAISHNAVA SACRIFICE AND GAVE ORDERS FOR ITS PREPARATION. BRAHMANAS FROM FAR AND WIDE WERE INVITED. THE KING ALSO ORDERED A MESSENGER TO GO AND INVITE THE PANDAVAS FOR THE OCCASION.

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"DURYODHANA'S MESSENGER CONVEYED THE INVITATION TO THE PANDAVAS IN THE FOREST. BUT YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

DURYODHANA IS INDEED LUCKY TO BE PERFORMING THE VAISHNAVA. WE WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE ACCEPTED THE INVITATION, BUT WE CANNOT GO TO HASTINAPURA AS WE ARE OBSERVING A VOW.

"BUT BHEEMA THUNDERED —

TELL KING DURYODHANA THAT I SHALL ATTEND THAT SACRIFICE IN WHICH THE WRATH OF THE PANDAVAS SHALL FUEL THE FLAMES OF THE WAR IN WHICH HE WILL BE DESTROYED.

"BACK IN HASTINAPURA PREPARATIONS FOR THE SACRIFICE WERE IN FULL SWING.

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"THE CITIZENS OF HASTINAPURA WERE OVERJOYED.

THIS SACRIFICE HAS SURPASSED ALL OTHERS.

"AND AT THE ROYAL PALACE, KARNA ADDRESSED DURYODHANA—

O KING, THE MIGHTY VAISHNAVA YAJNA HAS COME TO AN END. BUT ONCE WE HAVE DEFEATED THE PANDAVAS WE WILL PERFORM THE RAJASOOYA.

AND HERE I TAKE A VOW THAT AS LONG AS I DON'T SLAY ARJUNA, I SHALL NOT ALLOW ANY ONE TO WASH MY FEET. NOR SHALL I TASTE MEAT OR DRINK ANY WINE.

THE PANDAVAS GOT TO HEAR ABOUT KARNA'S VOW AND DECIDED TO LEAVE THE WOODS OF DWAITAVANA. AND MEANWHILE, O MONARCH, DURYODHANA CONTINUED TO RULE THE EARTH ALONG WITH HIS HEROIC BROTHERS, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM DRONA, KRIPA, BHEESHMA AND KARNA.

AND THUS ENDS THE TWENTY-THIRD SESSION OF OUR RENDERING OF VAISHAMPAYANA'S RECITAL OF VYASA'S IMMORTAL ITIHASA, THE MAHABHARATA.

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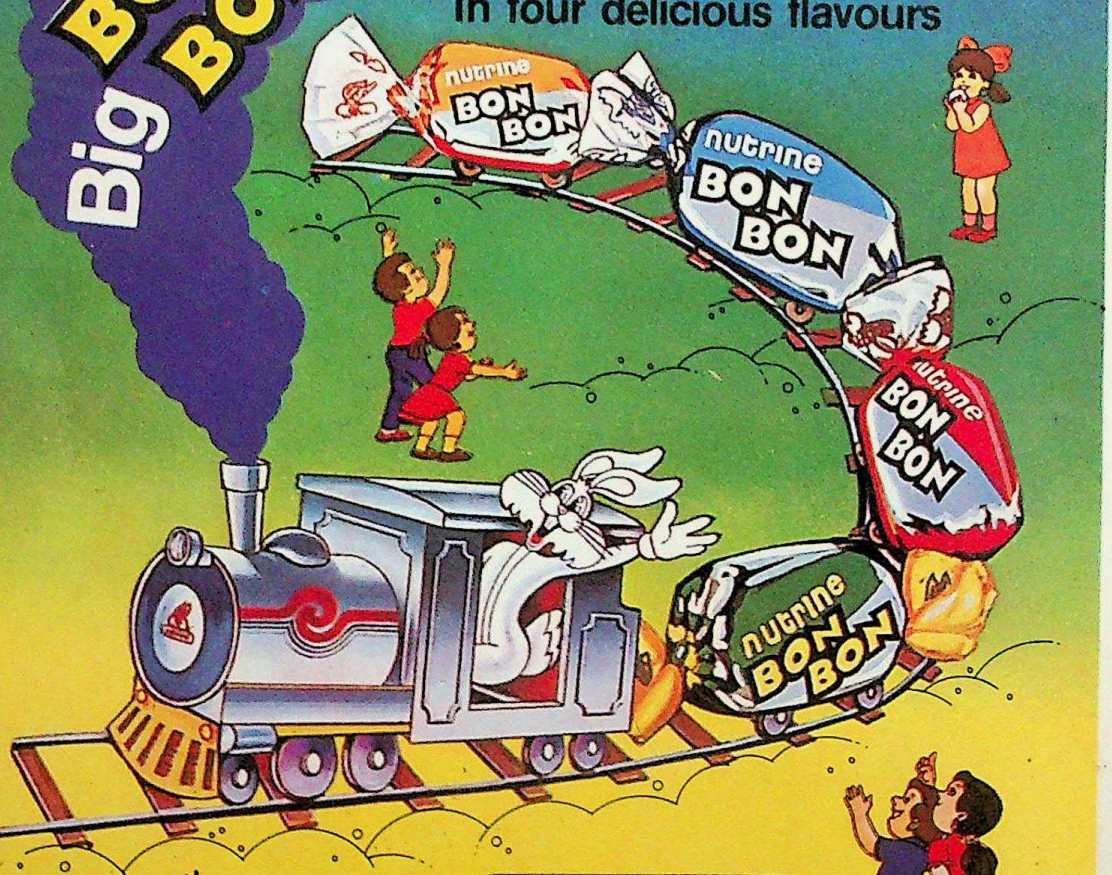

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